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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the bilingual educational needs of Indochinese peoples in the United States and suggests ways that these needs can be met. Outlined are two models of bilingual/bicultural education. The first model, which emphasizes a strong English as a Second Language (ESL) component, meets the needs of students born in Indochina. The second model, which is primarily for people of Indochinese descent who are born in the United States, features maintenance of the student's native language but primary instruction in English. The preservation of their native languages and ethnic and cultural identity is said to be necessary for the mental well being of Indochinese students in the United States. As practical means by which this can be accomplished, pedagogical techniques are suggested. Some information on linguistic patterns and cultural behavior of different Indochinese groups is also presented. (GC)

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BILINGUAL-BICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR INDOCHINESE

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Bilingual-Bicultural Education for Indochinese

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0. Introduction

Bilingual education in the U.S. has generally a twofold purpose: (1) to establish the right to use and retain the vernacular in education (for example Spanish or American Indian languages), and (2) to provide a more humane and pedagogically more realistic approach to the learning of English as a second language by ethnic minorities. This transitional, compensatory function of many bilingual education programs as an introduction to English has been severely criticized by Gaarder (1971), Kjolseth (1972) and others, who have repeatedly emphasized that the whole point of bilingual education is language retention and the development of the United States as a multilingual nation. This criticism, together with the dissatisfaction of language minority communities, has led to a shift in emphasis and even new legislation; many bilingual education programs which formerly aimed at rapid assimilation into the mainstream, now strive for language preservation and cultural enrichment.

Several valuable studies and reports on bilingual education in the U.S. provide a good picture of the situation (Alatis, 1970; Alatis and Twaddell, 1976; Andersson and Boyer, 1970; Cohen, 1975; Fishman, 1976a, b; Gaarder, forthcoming; John and Horner, 1971; Paulston, 1975; Spolsky, 1972). Reports of particular bilingual programs for Spanish-speaking students tht have been evaluated generally indicate favorable results. Spanish

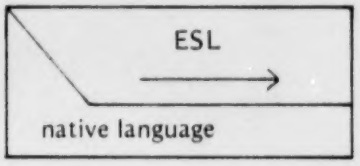
speakers instructed bilingually develop language skills in Spanish and English, and perform as well in content areas as students schooled unilingually. Native English speakers in such programs learn a second language (Spanish) and do not appear to lag in either language arts or other subjects.

Since 1975, the influx of Cambodians, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese to the U.S. from their native lands has added seven 250,000 people to the multicultural American society and enriched the linguistic picture of the nation. Of that population, which continues to increase every day, it is estimated that half is under twenty years of age.

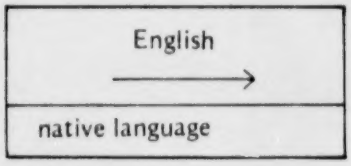
Although their linguistic and cultural backgrounds are different, the Cambodians, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese children in this country have two common denominators: (1) they need bilingual-bicultural education programs, and (2) through the bilingual-bicultural education programs for them, their linguistic and cultural heritages will be available to their peers.

1. Bilingual-bicultural education model for Indochinese children

Because of nature of Indochinese immigration to the U.S., two maintenance models of bilingual-bicultural education seem to be justified. The first one, with a strong ESL component will meet the educational needs of students who were born in Indochina, and the second will be a straight maintenance program for those who will be born in the U.S. The two models can be pictured as follows:



Model I: ESL



Model 2: Maintenance

2. Indochinese cultures and their preservation

Although the Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese (which are the main ethnic groups from Indochina that have migrated to the U.S.) cultures are different in many respects, one could generalize their world view as follows:

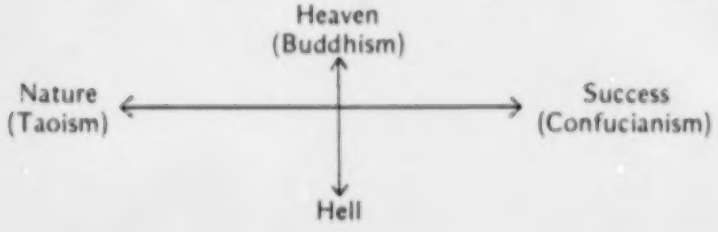
If we assume that the ultimate goal in life for everybody is the pursuit of happiness either in his present life or after it, then correlates for an Indochinese can be:

In this pursuit of happiness, one can take one of the three paths, firstly, the path that advances forward toward success, material wealth, power, etc., i.e. toward what might bring him happiness in his present life; secondly, the path that advances upward toward happiness after life (Nirvana, Heaven, or something along that line); and thirdly, the path advancing toward harmony with the universe, a return to nature, and fleeing from the headache of the materialistic life. If for one reason or another, none of the three paths is open to the individual, he may then choose the fourth path, which is to Hell either in his present life or after it by making trouble to himself and others.

There are four cultural forces that dictate to an Indochinese his choice of the paths toward happiness: Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, the cult of ancestors and lessons from nature. The differences between the Vietnamese on the one hand, and the Cambodians, Hmong, and Lao on the other seem to be due to the degree of these cultural forces:

Confucianism and Taoism seem to exert a much stronger influence on the behavior of the Vietnamiese than on that of the other groups (Bliatout, forthcoming; and Liem and Kehmeier, forthcoming).

The three paths toward happiness and the path toward Hell could be represented as follows:



Confucianism advocates social hierarchy, law and order, and personal improvement as a means for success. According to Buddhism, life is suffering, the law of causality is inescapable, and Nirvana – the ultimate goal and state of bliss – is reached when one has escaped from the vicious circle of life and death. Taoism teaches a return to Nature, harmony with oneself, others, and the Universe. The cult of ancestors is based upon the belief that there is a permanent link between the dead and the living, hence, one should strive at one's ancestors' expectations, and hence, not to choose the path to Hell. Besides these psycho-cultural forces, the Indochinese also learned from nature adaptability to natural phenomena.

These psycho-cultural backgrounds just like the languages of the Indochinese students should be maintained in order for them to preserve their mental well being. Numerous studies have proved that one's native language and culture are important factors in one's sense of identity as an individual and as a member of a group: learning a new language and living in another cultural environment means adopting a new identity. Lambert (1974) distinguishes 'additive' bilingualism, in which the learner loses nothing by learning a second language and culture, from 'substractive' bilingualism, in which he is forced to give something up. Clarke (1976) talks of a clash between the level of 'modernity' in the two cultures. Schumann (1976) draws attention to the 'social distance' separating the learner from the target culture. These concepts have obvious relevance to the immigrant situation of the Indochinese population in the U.S. in general, and the Indochinese students in particular. Indeed, many an Indochinese student have experienced a loss of personality in learning English: culture shock is like the alienated state of a schizophrenic unable to make sense of his surroundings (Liem, forthcoming: Clarke, 1976). This is supported by similarities between the language of schizophrenics and second language learners (Meara, 1977). Green (1977) claims that students regress to an earlier Freudian stage in a foreign language and express ideas that are more childish than their level of thinking in their native language.

Besides the detrimental effects of the loss of their cultural heritage on Indochinese students – should that happen – one must also think of the enrichment that their patrimoine brings to the American culture.

3. Indochinese languages and their preservation

As mentioned above, the preservation of their languages and cultures is an effective means to maintain the mental well being of Indochinese students in the U.S.

The President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies aims at strengthening these studies in the U.S., I believe. One way of doing that is to preserve the languages of the ethnic groups in the country, and that includes the languages of the Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese Americans.

4. English as a Second Language for Indochinese

The first bilingual education model proposed above calls for a strong ESL program which is very much needed by the Indochinese students who are presently in the school systems throughout the country.

Although my research on ESL was carried out only among Vietnamese students (Liem 1962, 1963a, 1963b, 1966, 1969, 1970a, 1970b, 1975), its pedagical applications could be safely extended to Cambodian, Hmong, and Lao students as well as considering the similarities of the Indochinese languages (Liem 1976).

In order to have a good ESL program for Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese students as well as a sound bilingual education program for them, we need to have bilingual texts for subject matters and good bilingual dictionaries for each Indochinese language. The pronunciation and grammar components will be discussed below.

4.1 English pronunciation for Indochinese

In order to have a good pronunciation of English, Indochinese students like any others should master the sound, stress, and intonation systems of the language.

4.1.1 English sounds and combinations of sounds that are difficult to Indochinese

Initial consonants: /p, t, k, č, ǰ, θ, d, s, z, r. g/

Final consonants: /b, d, g, c, j, f, θ, d, s, z, š, ž, l, n, r/

Initial consonant clusters: most two- and all three-consonant clusters

Final consonant clusters: all of them.

Morphophonemic endings (plural, third person singular, and past tense): all of them.

Vowels: /i, ɪ , e, ɛ , ə , u, ʊ , æ , ɚ /

4.1.2. **Stress in English versus tone in Lao and Vietnamese:** the Vietnamese and Lao apply their tone system to English words.

Intonation: falling, rising, and rising-fall in English, i.e. the whole intonational system.

4.2. Suggested drills (Liem, *English Pronunciation for Vietnamese*, 1962)

Recognition:

1. Pronounce minimal pairs of words in contrast:
2. Ask the questions:
   a. Same or different?
   b. Which are the same, 1-2, 13, or 2-3?
   c. Which column: A1 or A2?

/a/	/ə/
not	nut
hot	hut
etc.	etc.

Description of the sounds using charts.

Production: choral and individual. Short sentences with the sounds.

4.3. English grammar for Indochinese

4.3.1 Difficulties

Sentence level: all complex sentences to some extent.
Ex: *The person that you saw yesterday was John Smith.*

Clause level:
Passive clauses:
Ex: *Mary was given a book by John*
The book was given to Mary by John.
Yes-No interrogatives:
Ex: *Did John go to school yesterday?*
Imperatives:
Ex: *Run!*
Non-subject interrogatives:
Ex: *Whom did she guide?*
Extra-interrogatives:
Ex: *Why did he run?*

Morphological level:
Subjects and objects are omitted by Indochinese students when the context permits.
Morphophonemic difficulties: plural, past tense, third person singular.
Tenses: all the tenses in English.
Use of prepositions such as *at, in, on, to,* etc.

4.3.2 Pedagogical suggestions

For over a generation, there was the conviction that the best language teaching materials are based upon a contrastive analysis of the language to be learned and the language of the learner. Allied with the conviction was the hypothesis that the new linguistic system, and by extension, the new cultural behavior, should be established as a set of new habits by drill, drill and drill which would ensure overlearning. Such a pedagogical philosophy was systematized mainly by C.C. Fries (1945) and R. Lado (1957).

However, all this firm belief in contrastive analysis seems to be in the past, at least for some people. The generative-transformational theory, which was born in 1957 with N. Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures,* claims that language behavior is rule-governed behavior, and consequently that language learning should be in the form of a process of internalizing the creative rules in the new language, and not just that of mere habit forming.

Before such a theoretical dilemma, a language teacher may be tempted to make the most use of existing linguistic theories to improve teaching materials as best as he could. With this pragmatism in mind, I would suggest the use of grammatical drill (substitution, expansion, transformation, question-answer) as well as grammatical explanations. As for grammatical drill, the classroom teacher might find my *English Grammar for Vietnamese* (1963), and the two volumes of *English Pattern Practice for Vietnamese* (1963) useful to his teaching not only Vietnamese but Cambodian, Hmong, and Lao students.

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